

Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission
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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION
14 REILLY ROAD
FRANKFORT, KY 40601-1132

PAUL E. PATTON
GOVERNOR

July 31, 2002

The Honorable Governor Patton
State Capitol
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Governor Patton:

The Kentucky Environmental Quality Commission watched with the nation as workers attempted to rescue nine miners trapped in a coal mine 230 feet deep in Somerset Pennsylvania. EQC also joined in the national celebration when, after 3 days, these miners were safely brought home to their families.

This rescue showed that when put to the test we have the resources, technology, ingenuity and spirit to work together to get a job done – in this case saving the lives of 9 miners. With the rescue, however, come many questions that must be answered. Questions that center around inaccurate maps and their role in this accident.

Kentucky knows firsthand the dangers of inaccurate maps. Poor mapping was cited as a cause in the failure of the Martin County Coal slurry impoundment in Inez, Kentucky where 250 million gallons of sludge broke through into an underground mine. Fortunately, in this case no loss of life occurred, but the spill caused millions of dollars in property damage and polluted hundreds of miles of waterways.

There are more than 160,000 mine maps in Kentucky dating back to 1884, one-third of which are questionable. In addition there are no maps for 70 large closed mines in Kentucky due to a 1948 fire that destroyed these maps.

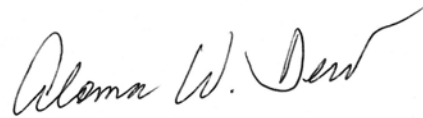
A recent report by the National Research Council on Coal Waste Impoundments recommended that the government set standards for mine surveying and mapping. It also recommended additional measures to support technologies that can better detect mine voids to prevent future accidents like that of Martin County and Quecreek Mine.

The commission respectfully requests your attention in this important matter and your leadership in urging Congress, MSHA, and OSM to move forward with implementing the NRC recommendations in a deliberate and timely fashion. EQC also

suggests that you convene a blue ribbon task force to further explore options to promote alternatives to coal mine impoundments and seek out opportunities to improve coal mine mapping in Kentucky.

Let us put the same energy displayed in saving these nine miners to work in preventing such accidents from occurring again. The future safety of Kentucky's miners and the health of the environment depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Aloma W. Dew". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final "W".

Aloma Dew, Chair

- c: Kentucky Congressional Delegation
Secretary Lauriski, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health
Crit Luallen, Secretary, Governor's Executive Cabinet
James Bickford, Secretary, Ky. Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
Cabinet
Jeffrey D. Jarrett, Director, Office of Surface Mining